

Relationship Advice: Why Your Dating New Year's Resolutions Fail



By Toni Coleman, LCSW

Once again it's time for that honored tradition of setting and then breaking our New Year's resolutions. Year after year we tell ourselves that this time it will be different; then armed with a renewed feeling of determination and optimism, we prepare to say goodbye to our bad habits, unhealthy lifestyle choices, and/or dead end job or even our relationship and love. Then at the beginning of February, we find that much of our resolve has been replaced with a feeling of defeat and a resignation that our life probably won't ever be what we want it to be. As a relationship expert, I know it's hard when your

dating goals aren't met. Keep reading for my [relationship advice](#) on why you're dating New Year's resolutions are failing and what to do about it.

Relationship Advice On Your New Year's Dating Resolutions

1. Avoid the number one reason for failed resolutions. Essentially we set ourselves up for failure every year. We do this by setting unrealistic goals, having too many goals, and not having a concrete and reasonable plan for how we will work toward them. This especially happens in the dating world. When we don't make any progress, our self-esteem and confidence take a hit, we feel defeated, and we abandon our plans. Our defeat contributes to a belief that this goal is just not possible for us, and if we do this year after year it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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2. Set a maximum of one or two achievable goals. These don't have to be major goals; they can be smaller objectives that will lead to bigger changes that can happen further down the road. By approaching change in small and manageable steps, you will help ensure your success, which will provide you with continued motivation and a boost of self-esteem along the way. It's also important to think about your core need or desire—in other words, what is the key problem or desired change you want to address. By correctly identifying this and tackling it first, you will find that most other issues you think require a separate resolution are connected to the core need, and will be impacted by addressing it.

3. Write down how and when you will take your action steps. Unless you have a concrete plan for working on your

resolutions, they will not get acted on. Your calendar contains a record of work obligations and tasks, social events, and other life priorities so you won't neglect or forget them. Can you imagine what would happen if you never wrote anything down? Many things would slip through the cracks, and you would be hopelessly off track. The same problem presents itself when you make an agreement with yourself to work on a resolution—if it isn't put into your schedule, it simply won't happen. My dating advice is to set small goals like making an online dating profile, going on three dates, etc.

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4. If a goal proves unrealistic or unattainable, tweak it until it works. This seems to be a hard one for many people as they equate stepping back with failure. However, this is no different from when you are involved with any project that presents unforeseen issues or challenges and requires you to make adjustments and changes along the way. If you are cutting a piece of wood for a home repair project and find it is too long or short, you will either have to shorten it or start with a new piece. If you are completing a work document and find omissions or errors, you go back and change, correct and/or delete until it is correct. Applying this same approach to achieving a resolution will work in much the same way, keeping you engaged until you are satisfied with the outcome.

5. Celebrate every small win—this keeps momentum going. It's hard to sustain ourselves through long, dry spells when we aren't receiving any feedback on our investment of time and energy. This is why using short-term objectives as building blocks to success is a great way to keep up the momentum. If you resolve to lose 5 pounds over 3-4 weeks as opposed to losing 40 pounds over 6-8 months, you increase your chance of success. At the end of those few weeks, you can congratulate yourself on achieving that first objective and get a boost to

your self-esteem, which will help you to remain positive and more confident that you can continue achieving your ideal weight.

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The people who are successful at realizing their New Year's resolutions do not have more self-control or discipline than you. They don't succeed because they are lucky, and many or most aren't blessed with more resources or a special talent that gives them an edge. What they do have is a clear and strong desire for change, a written and well thought out plan, and a willingness to be flexible with their process and open to making adjustments along the way. My relationship advice is to do the same thing.

[Toni Coleman](#), LCSW, CMC is an internationally known psychotherapist, relationship coach, and founder of consummate relationship coaching. As a recognized expert, Ms. Coleman is the featured relationship coach in The Business and Practice of Coaching, (Norton, September 2005.) In addition, she authored the forward for Winning Points with the Woman in your Life, One Touchdown at a Time, (Simon and Schuster, November 2005.) among many other achievements.

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